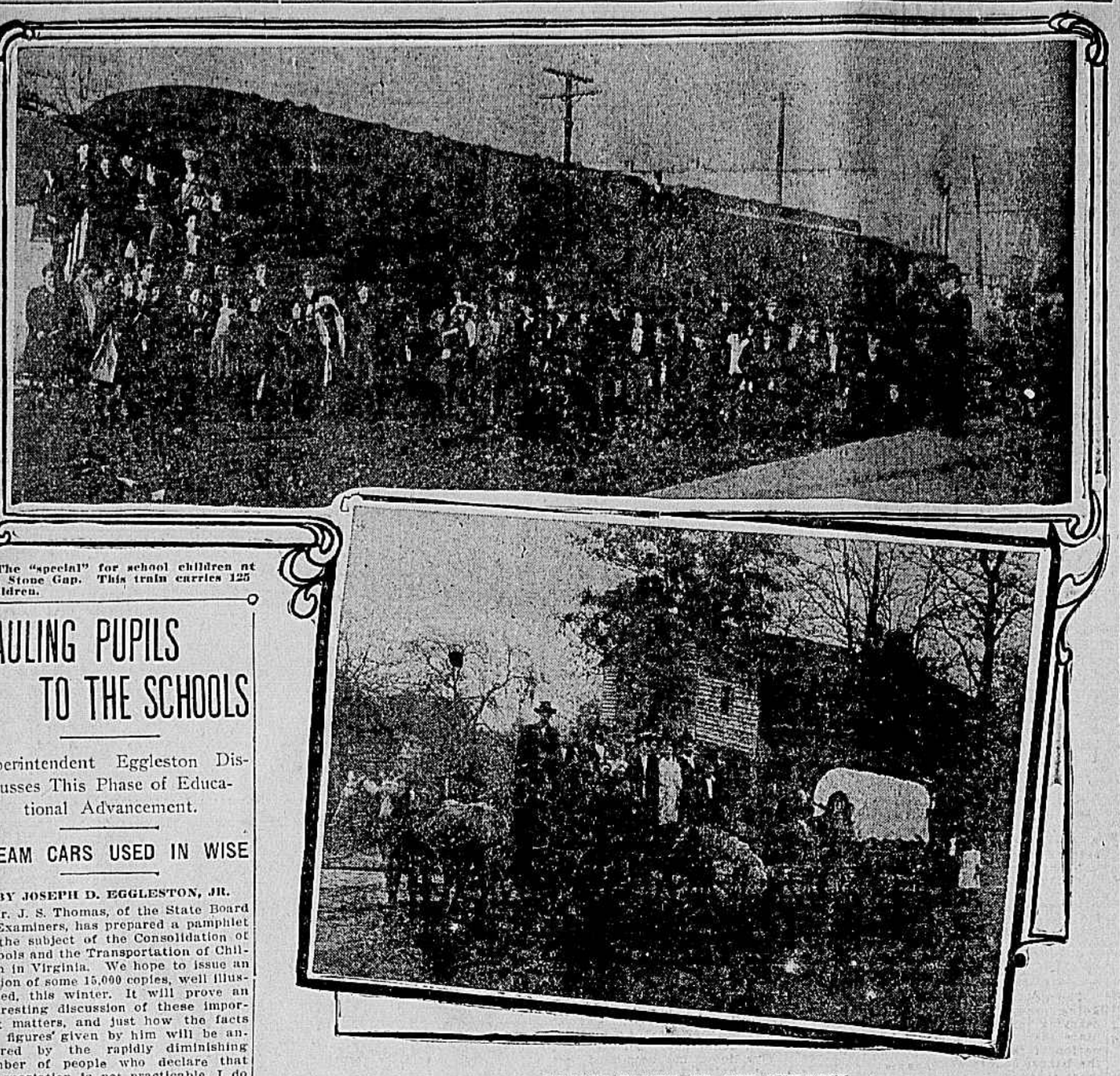
PUPILS BEING CARRIED TO SCHOOL IN VIRGINIA



The "special" for school children at Big Stone Gap. This train carries 125 children.

WAGONS TAKING UP THE CHILDREN.

HAULING PUPILS TO THE SCHOOLS

Superintendent Eggleston Discusses This Phase of Educational Advancement.

STEAM CARS USED IN WISE

BY JOSEPH D. EGGLESTON, JR.

Mr. J. S. Thomas, of the State Board of Examiners, has prepared a pamphlet on the subject of the Consolidation of Schools and the Transportation of Children in Virginia. We hope to issue an edition of some 15,000 copies, well illustrated, this winter. It will prove an interesting discussion of these important matters, and just how the facts and figures given by him will be answered by the rapidly diminishing number of people who declare that transportation is not practicable, I do not know. However, that is not worrying me. The pamphlet will be good and comfortable reading to those who believe that it is practicable, proper, business-like and best to haul children to school, rather than haul the school to the children.

The pictures shown on this page illustrate two methods of hauling children to school. One picture shows two ordinary farm wagons, both of which are covered in bad weather. The wagons have "common-sense" springs on them, seats made to order, and are capable of going through any road that a pair of horses or mules can pull them through. They cost not exceeding $60 each, complete. They were invented by L. D. Jones, of Green Bay, Prince Edward county, who has thereby proven again that man's ingenuity can overcome a bad road. One of these wagons travels about three and a half miles to school and back each day, and the other goes about seven miles and back.

Wise Uses Steam.

The other picture shows two cars and an engine. This small train carries about 125 children to school and back home daily. This is in Wise county, and the plan works admirably. Electric car lines are used a good deal in the State for getting children to and from school, and as soon as some one invents a flying machine that is guaranteed to fall easy in case of mishap, it may be safely predicted that Jones, of Prince Edward; Sebrell, of Southampton; John W. Todd and others, of Augusta; Gills, of Campbell; Jackson Davis, of Henrico; Geisinger, of Shenandoah, and others will get a supply of them in which the children can go to school.

The wagons most used in the two dozen counties of the State that have transportation are those made for the purpose of carrying children. As a rule they are very strong. They are made of almost any capacity desired. The price of a twenty-child wagon is about $115; of a fifteen-child wagon is about $75. The ten-child wagon should cost still less. The largest wagon in the State, one used in Campbell county, cost $210, hauls forty-seven children, and has four mules to pull it.

Transportation is not a cure-all. Nothing is except a patent medicine. But there are not a dozen counties out of the 100 in the State that cannot improve some of the schools by merging small schools into larger central ones and transporting the children. There are now over five dozen wagons in use, hauling over 1,000 children. One thousand wagons could be used to great advantage.

Helps Enrolment.

Mr. Thomas's pamphlet will show a remarkable increase in enrolment where consolidation and transportation have been tried in the State. It will show an equally remarkable improvement in the daily attendance. The improvement in the advancement of the pupils in their studies is likewise gratifying. He shows that in a given territory there were before consolidation and transportation 3,185 children enrolled; after the new plan was started the enrolment was 4,814. The daily attendance before was 2,107; afterwards, 3,607; number of teachers before, 155; afterwards, 169; per cent. of enrolment in daily attendance before, 66; afterwards, 75; increase of pupils per teacher on new plan, 10.

These figures are taken from territory where in some cases there is consolidation, but no transportation, and in some cases both. Mr. Thomas states that in territory where both consolidation and transportation prevail, the average daily attendance is considerably higher. There is not space to discuss the more rapid advancement of the pupils, resulting from better grading and better attendance.

How about the cost? Well, Mr. Thomas has some facts about this that give the opponents of consolidation and transportation very little comfort. But I must leave a discussion of this phase of the question to Mr. Thomas's pamphlet. It will be well worth reading.

SCHOOL INCENTIVES

One of the many very interesting papers read at the recent Teachers' Conference in Roanoke was that by Dr. Chandler, of Richmond, on "School Incentives." After a few words of introduction, Dr. Chandler said:

I am asked to speak on "School Incentives." The term seems to me susceptible of three interpretations. By it may be meant the incentives to the taxpayers of the State to maintain public schools as a matter of economic State policy; or it may mean the incentives to young men and women to engage in school work; or it may refer to the sort of schools and teachers and teaching demanded in order to attract the pupils, arouse and maintain their interest in school life and school concerns so as to train for the best possible citizenship. I shall consider only the last phase of interpretation.

The short limit of my time forbids any extended discussion of the many points that ought to receive consideration as bearing so vitally on school incentives for our children. I can do little more than call to your attention for fuller subsequent investigation and consideration some of the more prominent items which help to make up a live, progressive, up-to-date, practical life-training school, which every child in Virginia is entitled to attend.

I shall try to be practical and specific. Understand that we are now thinking of this problem from the viewpoint of the teacher's obligation to his school and to the uplift of his community. It is a fact of which I, as a teacher, am proud that in Virginia the teacher is a leader of thought among his people. It is also a fact of which I, as a teacher, am not proud that, more frequently than otherwise, he is too diffident and reserved in his disposition, and disinclined to take the initiative necessary to lead needed reforms. This is true in spite of his fitness for such a task by reason of his accurate acquaintance with the reforms needed and his superior intelligence. It ought not so to be. The teacher is a natural leader. He should cease to crucify himself and the dear children of Virginia upon the cross of submissive silence. Let him speak out, and everywhere assume the responsibility which is upon him of leading his people out of the wilderness of ignorance, of lethargic inaction, into the realm of higher ideals and higher accomplishments. There is no place for laziness or idleness—no sinecures, if you please, in a Virginia school. Every school ought to be a busy beehive of cheerful toil, of constant and sustained interest, of hopeful effort, of definite purpose and of continual growth. Life is growth: stagnation, death.

If the teacher is, or by right ought to be, a most potent factor in training for life-tasks and useful citizenship the children of Virginia, it necessarily follows that it makes all the difference in the world in determining the value of those tasks and the character of that citizenship what sort of a school the teacher maintains. As the teacher is so will be the school. This brings me more definitely face to face with the point I am trying to press upon you. Our query is, "How may the teacher make school life and work attractive to the child?" "What incentives may be properly held out to him that he may love school rather than hate it?" "What is the teacher's part in this problem?"

I know that this is a large and difficult problem. It is at the same time perhaps the most important and interesting one now confronting us as a body of teachers. Do not misunderstand me. We can, of course, by various devices of schoolroom flippancy and claptrap convert the schoolroom from a life-training camp, which it is intended to be, to a frivolous meeting house for entertainment and levity, which it is not intended to be. And yet a child ought to be happy in his work.

And we are considering how the school may provide for the child's physical, moral and mental development, so that he may be full of buoyant happiness during the process; so that he may be conscious of no conflict or hostility between his aims and purposes and those of his teacher; so that his school experiences may be joyful and happy—but at the same time with no sacrifice of steady earnestness and wholesome progress. For the attainment of this ideal result the teacher is more largely responsible than perhaps many of us think. Broadly speaking, four things must concur to bring it about:

First, the school building and grounds should be attractive; second, the teacher must love children and be able to understand them; third, the teacher must love his work; fourth, the teacher's methods of instruction must be inductive and concrete.

I wish to speak somewhat in detail, but briefly, about each of these requisites. Each is a sine qua non, and I believe I shall be able to refer all I have time to say to-day to some one of these heads.

Referring to the first, you ask, "What has the teacher to do with an attractive building and grounds?" "Do not the county, city and State authorities, out of the people's taxes, furnish these, and is not the teacher compelled to use them as he finds them?" Very true, they are furnished by the authorities, but need by no means be used as furnished. By a little energy and tact the teacher may arouse the pride of the pupils and patrons to clear up the school yard, make playgrounds, provide flower beds, plant vines, install flower boxes in the windows, bring suitable pictures to decorate the walls, draw pretty chalk calendars on the board, inaugurate or increase the school library by lending books, and otherwise give artistic touches to the exterior and interior of the premises, so as to convert an unsightly property into one of attractive beauty. In addition to this, the teacher may, by his persevering zeal and through the co-operation of his patrons, so popularize his school and so mould the public sentiment of his community that the people will, sooner or later, demand better equipment for his work. And this will prove, as it has always proved, a powerful incentive for regular and prompt attendance and interest in school life.

Our second prerequisite as a school incentive for children is that the teacher must love them and understand them. We cannot treat and handle children as we do adults. Their interests and viewpoints and conceptions differ from ours. If we would have them in love with their work and responsive to our efforts for them, we must have them in love with us. If we would gain their love, we must love them. Love begets love. It is reciprocative. This love must not be an outward formalism. It must be real and genuine. It must bear fruits. Our love for them will cause us to enter into their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears to see their difficulties, to understand their thoughts and their nature, and out of the wealth of sympathy which springs from this knowledge will enable us to provide for their needs. We must think their thoughts, put ourselves on their level, and, more by the strength of friendliness and love than that of dogmatic authority, guide them along the way of truth and of power. The ascetic and stoical teacher, devoid of the milk of human kindness and bereft of the power of human sympathy, annoyed by every restless energy and nervous activity of child-life, will never understand the child's nature nor be able to direct his buoyant energies into channels of well-poised and complacent thinking, because there is no bond of union, no sympathetic attraction between him and his pupil. The child is full of life and hope and fun and frolic. The teacher should be also. We should not stand too much aloof from our pupils in any of their concerns, but without making hollow pretences, as early as possible, establish between ourselves and our pupils an indissoluble union of interest, of love and of understanding. This will prove an effective antidote for many of our little patients' ills and restore them to a fair measure of health and contentment.

As a means of establishing this relationship, I make three definite suggestions. First, look for the good in every child, and use that as the basis for the life-structure you are to build. The evil will appear soon enough, and you need not search it out. Carry sunshine in your face and heart. Adopt an optimistic philosophy (story of the two frogs). Secondly, study the child's home life and surroundings, and give him practical knowledge that you are his friend. Ask him about what he does at home, and how and why he does this and that. Tell him how much you would like to do this, that and the other thing that he does. Accept social invitations to his house; such friendly interest will bring them. This policy will at once produce in him the feeling that you are the greatest person in the world, and he will behave for you, and study, too. The incentive is present. Thirdly, practice what you preach. Do not make the mistake of thinking that you can fool children. It isn't right to fool them, in the first place; and in the second place it can't be done (famous sayings of Lincoln). Children are quick to detect shams. A rugged honesty, a dogged consistency and a uniform course of fair dealing are virtues which even childhood understands and admires. Confidence in the teacher and admiration for him, once established and always maintained, will be a mighty bulwark in time of trouble. It will allay the pretty frets and restrain the emotional storms of thoughtless little rebels, and soon enlist them with the joyous forces of righteousness and truth.

The third prerequisite as a stimulus and incentive to secure the abiding interest of pupils is that the teacher should love his work. The teacher who performs his tasks in a perfunctory way, who goes through the schoolroom gyrations of the day with monotonous punctuality and sameness, who is a mere time-server for pay, can never hope to have interested workers under control or reach to any measure of success in his profession. But, on the contrary, the teacher who looks upon teaching as his profession, takes a pride in it, loves and studies it, will ever be ready with an elasticity of program, method and device to meet every schoolroom emergency, to secure the co-operative interest of his pupils, and supply effectively their varying needs. The one sort of teacher spells failure; the other, success. If a teacher's heart is not in his work, neither should he be in it—that is, if his work is teaching, for teaching, like every other profession, is a jealous mistress. It is a martinet, and demands of every member "uberrimam fidem," the utmost good faith and the most exacting service.

The fourth prerequisite for enlisting the good graces of the children so that they will love their school tasks is that the teacher's methods of instruction be inductive and concrete. Failure in this is absolutely inexcusable and destructive of good results. We must appeal to children through ways and means that they like; for, when reduced to its last analysis, it is found to be true as a matter of psychology and of experience that the ways they like to do things conform to the fundamentals of modern pedagogy; that is to say, abstractions, formula and rule teaching are incomprehensible, dry and repugnant to the average child; while inductive and concrete teaching fill him with raptuous delight and give him an ever broadening consciousness of his own powers. The former will drive him from school, or at best make of him a mere automaton and copyist. The latter will train him to be an independent, self-reliant, happy toiler. Such abstractions as definition and classification are the results of the accumulation of experience. Let neither teached nor children mistake them for knowledge or power. As soon as we begin to compress knowledge and experience into the limits of definition we take away life, spontaneity and enthusiasm. Definitions are merely guide posts which can be erected only after the road to knowledge and power has been explored. The teacher has opportunities by the employment of methods and devices in harmony with the nature and disposition of children to win them, to control them, to interest them, to train them, to make them masters of themselves.

I wish, in closing, to note a few principles and devices which a teacher should use as school incentives for children. I present only a partial list list, yet one which from my own experience and observation has appealed to me as being indispensable aids in the difficult art of concrete instruction. I am sorry that I have time merely to outline these, not at all to dissect or enforce them.

No. 1. Co-ordinate the school interests with the out-of-door life interests of the child. Let him see and understand that education is one thing, an entity, and that all his thoughts and efforts and actions in all places are educative. Bring to bear upon his school tasks his extra-schoolroom interests; for example, encourage him to clip pictures or stories to embellish his history and geography work, let him make up his own history and geography questions and his own arithmetic examples. He will love to do it.

No. 2. Recognize his individuality, and give him credit for being somebody and knowing something. You know that one of the most potent arguments against the public schools is that all the children are ground out through the same mill, without proper recognition of the individuality of each child and without the diversity of training suited thereto. And it is undeniable that there is not only plausibility, but unanswerable logic in the stricture thus passed upon our work. It is our business to escape from this dilemma not by specious pretences of self-righteousness, but by manfully recognizing this defect in our work and by using methods and devices through which the individual tastes and traits of our children may not be stifled, but have "free course and be glorified." This should be done as a matter of policy, but chiefly because it is right in principle and will yield far happier results. And, moreover, it is the kind of training, without doubt, which appeals as a powerful incentive to children. We cannot annihilate the native adaptabilities or ignore the native tendencies and powers of a child without endangering him.

No. 3. See that the child understands why. Children like to be treated fairly. It seems hard to them to do or refrain from doing a thing the reason for which is not understood, and the result of which is nebulous, hazy, ill-defined and uncertain. Children are discriminating and usually accurate in their judgments, and there will be responsive appreciation of some insight into cause and effect. Dogmatic and empiric demands rile and ruffle and render hostile, but a rational policy, based upon the common-sense law of mutual knowledge and fair play, is conciliatory and cohesive.

No. 4. The teacher should make definite preparation for definite tasks. I am a great stickler for this. It is time-saving, and will most surely lead the teacher to study of both subject and pupil so as to make real and suitable provision for his daily development along lines of minimum friction and maximum interest. In fact, in my own school, I have instructed every one of my teachers to arrange beforehand every day what she is going to teach in each subject and how she is going to teach it.

No. 5. Subscribe to some of the excellent school journals, which are full of objective suggestions and plans, and try those which appeal most to you.

No. 6. As devices for good conduct for which the children's enthusiasm may be aroused, I may mention the "tens-helpers" plan, good-conduct banners, extras, the "sliding-percentage" scale, etc., but I cannot detail these now.

No. 7. Let the children get together often in assembly and render a program of reading, recitation and song. Get them feel that this is their hour, and let them, under your direction, arrange the program and have their parents come.

No. 8. The limit of the teachers' knowledge should be far beyond the subjects he is to teach; otherwise he will be utterly unable to bring to bear upon them that wealth of information whose value to the teacher lies chiefly in his ability to marshal it for use. He should never reach his ideal. God forbid that he reach it! But his ideal should be upon a sliding scale, always pointing upward and reaching upward as knowledge increases.

Finally, I wish to point you to four great books as aids to you in the directions I have hinted at, namely, Jean Mitchell's "School," DuBois's "Point of Contact," Herbert Spencer's "Education," and, last and foremost, the methods and teachings of the greatest teacher of all time, Jesus Christ, as set forth in the New Testament Scriptures.